

the Committee on Ways and Means. They simply turned a deaf ear not just to us, maybe we do not matter much, but turned a deaf ear to the American people, the people that wanted to come in and talk about what this Medicare bill was really about.

So while there were back-room deals, the American Medical Association and other groups got into the back room with the Republican leadership, the elderly were not even allowed in the hearing rooms to testify on this bill.

One lady in the Committee on Commerce a couple of weeks ago came in, tried to testify, was gavelled down. Eventually, within a few minutes, 15 elderly people, some in wheelchairs, some with canes, all of them I believe over 70 years old, were arrested and hustled out of the committee room, taken down into the basement. Several of them were handcuffed. All of them were taken to the police station in paddy wagons and fingerprinted and mug-shotted. It was a pretty amazing spectacle.

Then today, almost as disturbing, the Speaker of the House stood on this floor and said something, and I am sure he did not knowingly do this, but said something that clearly was not true about a provision in the bill that the gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. MARKEY] had talked about, a provision in the bill that has been removed from the Medicaid bill that allowed elderly widows, some 11 million in this country that literally had their Medicare premiums paid for because they were so poor that they could not pay for them, and particularly when they go from \$46 to \$90 or \$100, whatever the Gingrich Medicare bill ends up raising them to, that money was taken away from them.

The Speaker may have been confused or it may have been bad staff work. It may have simply been all the late-night deals that were cut as the bill was changed as late as last night in the middle of the night, and he was simply confused.

I have only been here 3 years, but there is this new arrogance to this place that I have never seen and heard of before, but it is particularly disturbing when those kinds of things are said on the floor because of either confusion or bad staff work, but the process has been so closed that people have not had a chance to really learn about what is in this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to my friend, the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE].

Mr. PALLONE. I appreciate the gentleman yielding.

Mr. Speaker, there was obviously confusion in the Speaker's mind, but there really should be no confusion about this issue. Because, as the gentleman knows, I offered this amendment in our Committee on Commerce to make sure that in Medicaid these qualified Medicare beneficiaries were going to have their part B premiums covered.

The gentleman from Illinois [Mr. RUSH] offered the same amendment on the Medicare bill in the Committee on Commerce, the bad bill that we considered today; and I went before the Committee on Rules yesterday and asked that the amendment be considered as part of the bill today, had a dialogue with the members of the Committee on Rules, including the gentleman from Georgia [Mr. LINDER] who was there, and explained that we wanted to make sure that there was a guarantee in the Medicare bill for these widows and these low-income senior citizens for which the Federal Government now pays their part B premium.

It is true, it may very well be that the Speaker misunderstood, but there is no excuse for it. Because in fact on three different occasions we have asked for this to be considered, on two occasions in this bill. The Committee on Rules denied the opportunity to have that amendment considered. The bill that we had today did not have the guarantee that those Part B premiums for those low-income seniors would be paid.

I think what the gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. MARKEY] said is absolutely correct. We should go back to the Committee on Rules next week, ask that it be considered again in concert with the Medicaid bill. But I am really outraged over the fact that the suggestion was made today that somehow this guarantee was in the bill. It is not in the bill; it is not in the Medicaid bill; and we, all of us collectively, have tried very hard to make sure the guarantee was there and it is not there.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. None of this would have happened, I think, if we had had hearings. There were dozens of hearings on Waco and Randy Weaver and Whitewater but no hearings on Medicare and Medicaid which affect everybody in this country.

I think the Speaker misspoke and was probably confused but sort of attacked our friend from Massachusetts by name. Surely if we had had hearings and not had these late-night deals and really, as a country, really discussed Medicare, Medicaid and what it means to senior citizens, you do not cut \$270 billion to give tax breaks to the rich.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Colorado [Mr. MCINNIS] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. MCINNIS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Connecticut [Ms. DELAURO] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Ms. DELAURO addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

H.R. 2259

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oklahoma [Mr. WATTS] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WATTS of Oklahoma. Mr. Speaker, as the son of a policeman and a fervent supporter of strong anticrime measures, I believe that we must attack the root problems that cause crime in America and that we must punish equal crimes with equal justice regardless of a person's color or economic class.

Last night we considered a well-intentioned bill, H.R. 2259, that sought to address one part of the Nation's crime problem, but unfortunately, it missed the mark by a mile and sent the wrong message to the Nation's drug traffickers and drug abusers.

The U.S. Sentencing Commission recently recommended that sentences for possessing and trafficking in crack cocaine should be the same as for possessing and trafficking in powder cocaine.

The Commission is right to seek to equalize punishment. It is essentially unjust to have one standard of justice for the type of cocaine that is abused in the expensive homes of our finest suburbs and a different standard of justice for the type of cocaine that is abused in the abandoned crack houses of our worst ghettos.

The Commission should have sought equalization by raising the sentences for powder cocaine. My view is that higher sentences, at equal levels, are needed in these cases.

Unfortunately, procedural rules did not allow that vote, so I voted to recommit H.R. 2259 with that goal in mind. When that failed, I had no choice but to vote against final passage.

We must punish the drug possessor, and work to rehabilitate him. But we must imprison the drug distributor and throw away the key. He haunts our Nation's schoolyards and makes his fortune off his poverty stricken and addicted buyer. He condemns his victims to a life of poverty and an early death. And his victims are disproportionately inner-city kids—young black Americans.

According to the Department of Health and Human Services [HHS], black Americans are being disproportionately affected by sentencing disparities. Only 4 percent of those sentenced for violating crack laws are white although 51 percent of crack users are white. In contrast, 88 percent of those sentenced for crack violations are black Americans, while only 38 percent of crack users are black, according to the HHS study.

I have said numerous times that this country's laws must deal with racial discrimination in as aggressive a manner as possible. I believe that implicit in that philosophy is a mandate to change any law that results in de facto racial discrimination.

As the father of young children, I am committed to passing the strongest

antidrug measures possible. H.R. 2259 did not meet that standard.

MEDICARE BILL HAS WRONG PRIORITIES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Minnesota [Mr. VENTO] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. VENTO. Mr. Speaker, today, the process did not afford the opportunity for a very full discussion of the Medicare bill on the House floor, and so I wanted to take this opportunity to express my dismay and disappointment with the action of the House today, reneging on the basic health care protection that has existed for older Americans and for others that are the beneficiaries of Medicare for the past 30 years.

The fact is that Medicare is in trouble today, my colleagues. It is in trouble because the Republicans, this new majority that is in control, has not given the type of consideration, the type of deliberation, that has been the hallmark of much of what has been considered in the past in this Congress.

I think we are seeing a breakdown really of the committee system here, where the committees, even though this proposal has made some 8 months ago, 7 months ago, no proposal was forthcoming; and we end up with a 1,000 page bill on this floor that dramatically and drastically changes the policy.

I think, for starters, that the priorities are all wrong in terms of what is happening with the budget. The fact is that the \$270 billion, it has been repeated today, that is saved in Medicare is not necessary for the Medicare trust fund. In fact, of course, much of it will be used for other Republican priorities that are in the budget. This is not a bipartisan budget, this is very much a partisan effort in this House, and I suspect the same reaction in the Senate.

There are 245 billion dollars' worth of tax breaks and not tax cuts, tax breaks that go specifically to some people in our society, taking away tax breaks from others. In fact, an article in the Wall Street Journal today indicates that those that have incomes less than \$30,000 under the Republican tax plans will actually end up spending or actually end up paying more in taxes. Those under \$30,000 will pay more in taxes under the tax plans that have been advanced by the House and by the Senate. That is wrong. I think these are the wrong priorities.

I think the right priorities are to deal with health. If anybody wants an example of what is wrong and where we are today as compared to some time ago, this last year we were talking about extending health care to those that did not have it. We found that there are 40 million Americans from working families that had no health care. Today, that number has risen by nearly 1.5 million. There are more families that do not have health care. They

do not have Medicare. They do not have Medicaid. They do not have a private health insurance plan through their employer or through their own means. They are without.

What is happening today is we are not talking about meeting the needs of those 40 million plus in American working families. We are talking about reneging, pulling back on the Medicare system today to the tune of \$270 billion today for tax breaks for the rich; and we are talking about next week taking \$182 billion out of the Medicaid system. That is a system for the kids in this country, 16 million children, other millions of other people that would be denied the opportunity for dignity, for health care.

These are programs that are for the American family. These are the programs that were put together so that we could meet the needs of our families, for my parents, and for others that might be disabled, that have the fortune to have a good, long life.

The funny part about it is I keep talking about all the trust funds today, trust fund A and B, but the trust fund A has never been responsible for one dime of our deficit in this country, and the same is true of most of the Social Security programs, are not responsible for the deficits in this country. That is not what has created the deficit. Part B because of the health care costs is a contributor.

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But the fact is that we cannot just, when the cuts are made, they are not just cuts. They are cuts that are made with no opportunity. You are not empowering senior citizens to challenge the system simply by giving them choice. You do not give them choice in this bill. They have choice today. They have HMO's, they have preferred physician options. They have those types of choices already today.

This offers nothing new. What you take is you are taking away the very tools they need to challenge the cost of what health care is today, taking away the ability to pursue fraud, taking away the legal system, the ability to challenge the medical doctor when in fact they make a mistake, when they do something wrong, taking away the accountability in this bill, taking away \$270 billion and any ability or most of the ability for older Americans and for others in this health care system to really deal with that.

In other words, you are making them pay more, considerably more for the part B premiums and giving them less in benefits, capping the benefits. Read what is in your bill. Read what is in your particular proposals. You have not done so. You do not know what it is.

I think there are many Members in this body from what I can see that do not even understand what current funding means with regard to Social Security and Medicare, where the workers today are paying for the bene-

fits of those that are receiving them and we are usually ahead about a year. That is what current funding is, but they do not understand it. They cannot predict it. But yet they are up here cutting \$270 billion in Medicare benefits to give tax breaks to their wealthy contributors and their special interests. It is wrong and it should have been defeated today, not passed.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CHAMBLISS). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida [Mr. GOSS] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. GOSS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

THE BILL WAS WRITTEN IN THE SPEAKER'S OFFICE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas [Mr. DOGGETT] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DOGGETT. Mr. Speaker, the rules of debate here in the House are rather constrained at times, and they were constrained this evening as we had the opportunity to witness at the close of this great debate a bit of graceless gloating from the Speaker of the House, Mr. GINGRICH, about the victory that everyone on all sides knew was going to occur here today. They provided no opportunity, of course, to ask him a question, much less to respond immediately to his comments, but those comments deserve a response.

It is true that this Chamber is almost empty at this moment. Of course, our Republican friends are out popping the champagne corks, celebrating as is their right the fact that they really got those seniors. They are able to be out there saying, well, our buddies are going to really like that tax break we are able to provide now, and we taught those seniors a lesson when we took \$270 billion out of Medicare so we could fund our tax break for the rich.

But Members will recall specifically, though they are celebrating now, that when the Speaker spoke he began by reading to us the names of the family members in his family and how much they were interested in what was occurring here today. Then he proclaimed with the greatest magnanimity there were so many who had contributed to the raiding of the Medicare system today, it is peculiar that omitted from that list of all those who helped was the Golden Rule Insurance Co. You will recall that it was only a week ago that CBS Evening News reported that Golden Rule, which had complied with the golden rule by contributing over a million dollars to the Republican party, stood to be one of the major beneficiaries of this so-called Medicare reform since they are the prime promoter of the so-called Medisave Program.

The truth of the matter is that this particular bill, not 10 Members of this House knew what was in it until about